

**Hampton Roads Planning District Commission
Minutes of March 17, 2022 Meeting**

The March 17, 2022 meeting of the Hampton Roads Planning District Commission (HRPDC) was called to order by the Chair at 12:35 p.m. in the Regional Board Room located at 723 Woodlake Drive in Chesapeake, Virginia with the following in attendance:

Commissioners in Attendance:

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| Andria McClellan, Chair (NO) | Scott Stevens (JC) |
| David Jenkins, Vice-Chair (NN) | McKinley Price (NN) |
| Christopher Price (CH) | Courtney Doyle (NO) |
| Debbie Ritter (CH) | Shannon Glover (PO)* |
| Brian Solis (CH) | Randall Wheeler (PQ) |
| Ella Ward (CH) | Leroy Bennett (SU) |
| Frank Rabil (FR) | Albert Moor (SU) |
| Carol Steele (GL) | Robert Elliott (SY) |
| Steven Brown (HA) | Melissa Rollins (SY) |
| Mary Bunting (HA)* | Barbara Henley (VB) |
| Donnie Tuck (HA) | Guy Tower (VB) |
| Joel Acree (IW) | Andrew Trivette (WM) |
| John McGlennon (JC) | Neil Morgan (YK)* |

Commissioners Absent:

| | |
|------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Stephen Best (CH) | Michael Johnson (SH) |
| Amanda Jarratt (FR) | Michael Stallings (SM) |
| Phillip Bazzani (GL) | T. Carter Williams (SM) |
| Randy Keaton, Treasurer (IW) | Patrick Duhaney (VB) |
| Cynthia Rohlf (NN) | Robert Dyer (VB) |
| Kenneth Alexander (NO) | Louis Jones (VB) |
| Larry "Chip" Filer (NO) | John Moss (VB) |
| Danica Royster (NO) | Sabrina Wooten (VB) |
| Gordon Helsel (PQ) | Douglas Pons (WM) |
| Angel Jones (PO) | Sheila Noll (YK) |
| William Gillette (SH) | |

Executive Director:

Robert A. Crum, Jr., Secretary

Other Participants:

Mark Geduldig-Yatrofsky (CAC)
Bob Baldwin (PO)

**Late arrival or early departure*

Others Recorded Attending:

Mindy Carlin and Emily Reynolds (Access Point Public Affairs/Suffolk); Andy Darden (American Engineering); James Russell (Center for Atmospheric Sciences); David Westcott (Chesapeake); Chris Stone (Hampton Roads Chamber of Commerce); Steve Hansen (Hampton Roads Offshore Wind Diversity Advocacy); Ted Henifin (Hampton Roads Sanitation District); Bill Thomas (Hampton University); Angela Hopkins (Newport News); Jessica Dennis (Norfolk); Ruth Amundsen (Norfolk Resident); Ed Reed (Two Capitols Consulting/ Hampton/ Virginia Beach); Drew Lumpkin (U.S. Senator Mark Warner's Office); and Keith Cannady, Kelli Arledge, Robert Cofield, KC Filippino, Kyle Gilmer, Greg Grootendorst, John Harbin, Whitney Katchmark, Sara Kidd, Krista Lauro, Cynthia Mulkey, Pavithra Parthasarathi, Katherine Rainone, Dmitry Rekhter, Dale Stith, Joe Turner, and Sheila Wilson (HRPDC/HRTPO Staff)

Approval/Modification of Agenda

Chair McClellan asked for a motion to approve the March 17, 2022 HRPDC Meeting Agenda as presented.

Motion: Commissioner McKinley Price Moved to approve the agenda as presented; seconded by Commissioner Ella Ward. The Motion Carried.

Public Comments

Chair McClellan indicated that there were two submitted public comments received.

Mr. Robert A. Crum, Jr., HRPDC/HRTPO Executive Director, reported that a public comment submitted by Mr. Steve Hansen was included in the agenda package and a public comment submitted by Ms. Eileen Woll was distributed as a handout. Both submitted comments were regarding the Hampton Roads Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS).

Mr. Crum announced that two public speakers would address the Commission also regarding the CEDS. He expressed appreciation that Hampton Roads residents were taking the time to review the draft CEDS document and provide feedback. He indicated that HRPDC staff will work with the Hampton Roads Alliance to ensure that public perspectives and input are addressed and discussed with the Alliance Board of Directors as the main developing partner.

**Commissioner Shannon Glover arrived*

Chair McClellan clarified that the CEDS was approved by the Alliance Board but the public comment period for the document was still open. She added that there would likely be future amendments that would also require the Alliance Board's approval.

Chair McClellan recognized Ms. Ruth Amundsen to address the Commission.

Ms. Amundsen, a Norfolk resident, suggested that the CEDS would benefit from more data regarding the economic inequities that exist in Hampton Roads and plans for how to improve and mitigate those inequities, particularly as it relates to the African-American community.

Chair McClellan thanked Ms. Amundsen and recognized Mr. Steve Hansen to address the Commission.

Mr. Hansen referenced his submitted comments included in the agenda package. He expressed that the diversity, equity, and inclusion shortcomings of the CEDS could be better addressed, in part, by more thoroughly following the guidelines recommended by the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA). Mr. Hansen also supported changing the vacant HRPDC Community Affairs and Civil Rights position's title to Community Affairs and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, and he urged the Commission to fill that position.

Chair McClellan thanked Mr. Hansen, noted that the HRPDC is currently recruiting for the position, and indicated she would speak with Mr. Crum regarding the title. She also clarified that the CEDS will be amended to address some of the comments received, but the Commission was not scheduled to meet in April and would not see the document before approved by the Alliance. However, she indicated that the HRPDC could coordinate distributing the document to Commission members via email for commentary,

Full transcription of public comments will be included in the subsequent Commission meeting's agenda, which will be available on the HRPDC website.

Special Presentation in Recognition of Mr. Ted Henifin, Hampton Roads Sanitation District

Chair McClellan announced a special presentation in recognition of Mr. Ted Henifin and his 17 years of dedicated leadership at the Hampton Roads Sanitation District (HRSD). She applauded his many regional efforts and commended his kindness, innovation, and leadership.

Commissioner Al Moor stated that since 2006, Mr. Henifin led an organization that is nationally known and should make Hampton Roads proud as an environmental leader. Mr. Moor said that he admired Mr. Henifin, appreciated his counsel, and wished him the best in his future endeavors.

Commissioner Neil Morgan seconded Chair McClellan and Commissioner Moor's comments. He added that Mr. Henifin has been a visionary leader for Hampton Roads for many years, and the community is a better place because of the work of Mr. Henifin and his team. Commissioner Morgan specifically commended Mr. Henifin's efforts on the regional

consent order, thanked him for making Hampton Roads a better place, and wished him a great retirement.

Commissioner John McGlennon, on behalf of the James City County Board of Supervisors and the James City Services Authority, thanked Mr. Henifin for his work and the increased assistance and transparency of HRSD under his leadership. Commission McGlennon echoed Commission Morgan's comments regarding the importance of the regional consent order. He commended Mr. Henifin's regional leadership and said that the innovation of the SWIFT Program is a legacy that will last forever.

Ms. Whitney Katchmark, HRPDC Principal Water Resources Engineer, expressed her appreciation of Mr. Henifin's availability, readiness, transparency, leadership, and above-and-beyond approach as a regional partner. Ms. Katchmark said it was a pleasure working with Mr. Henifin and wished him an enjoyable retirement.

Commissioner Donnie Tuck indicated that Mr. Henifin was Public Works Director for the City of Hampton before Commissioner Tuck joined City Council, so he knew him more personally than as leader of HRSD. He commended his innovation in the SWIFT Program and involvement in many different community programs and projects, and he wished him the best.

Commissioner McKinley Price thanked Mr. Henifin for the innovative blending of the SWIFT Program with the Riverview Farm Park in Newport News.

Mr. Henifin thanked the Commission members for their kind words and best wishes. He said he was grateful for the opportunity to work in and for the region and emphasized that continued regional approaches and efforts are what will make the difference in the future for Hampton Roads.

In recognition of Mr. Henifin's many regional contributions, Chair McClellan, Vice-Chair David Jenkins, and Mr. Crum presented Mr. Henifin with a 3-Dimensional Nautical Wood Chart of the Hampton Roads region.

Executive Director's Report

Mr. Crum referenced his monthly report included in the agenda package and reported on a few items of interest for Commission Member information.

Mr. Crum highlighted the Green Star Teachers item in the For Your Information portion of the agenda package. The askHRgreen program recently recognized ten local educators with its Green Star Teachers Awards. Held in concert with the organization's 10th anniversary year, the educator recognition program included a \$1,000 monetary award for each of the teachers to use for future, green-themed classroom projects. The winning submissions included teachers from throughout the greater Hampton Roads region. Among the recipients were those who involved their students in planting community gardens,

organizing school recycling programs, creating outdoor classrooms, and planting trees on school grounds. The Green Star Teachers may use their awards to cover needs such as supplies, classroom resources, or funding to underwrite a dynamic “green” student-driven initiative.

Mr. Crum reported that he was scheduled to meet with the Peninsula Chief Administrative Officers (CAOs) to discuss opportunities to extend the Birthplace of America Trail (BoAT)/ Virginia Capital Trail down the Peninsula. The existing 52-mile trail starts in downtown Richmond and ends near Williamsburg. If the trail is extended to Fort Monroe, then there will be over 100 miles of continuous trail. Future expansion plans could include continuing the trail over the ferry and through Surry County effectively connecting the Southside Rail Trail to Norfolk and the Virginia Beach oceanfront.

Mr. Crum also addressed the Joint Land Use Study (JLUS) Implementation discussion from the previous Commission meeting. The CAOs in the Cities of Chesapeake, Norfolk, Portsmouth, and Virginia Beach are each appointing a five- to six-member technical staff local implementation working group. The HRPDC will facilitate quarterly meetings with the working groups, HRMFFA, and military partners to track progress and alignment and explore possible federal funding opportunities.

Community Advisory Committee (CAC) Report

Mr. Mark Geduldig-Yatrofsky, Chair of the Community Advisory Committee (CAC), reported that the CAC had not met since the last Commission meeting. The next CAC meeting was scheduled for April 14, 2022.

**Commissioner Mary Bunting arrived*

Consent Agenda

Chair McClellan asked Mr. Crum to briefly describe the modified Consent Agenda items, which included the following:

- Meeting Minutes – February 17, 2022 Commission Meeting
- Treasurer’s Report – January 2022
- 2022 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Regional Priorities
- Memorandums of Agreement for Virginia Telecommunications Initiative (VATI) Grant Administration
- Contract Amendments (Roadway Flooding Sensors)
- HRPDC Resolution 2022-01 for FY 2023 FHWA State, Planning, and Research (SPR) Funds Program
- Community Advisory Committee (CAC) Appointments

Mr. Crum highlighted the 2022 CDBG Regional Priorities, the Memorandums of Agreement for the VATI Grant Administration, and the Contract Amendments (Roadway Flooding Sensors) Items:

- Each year, the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) requests Planning District Commissions to rank regional priorities for the CDBG program and provide a list of anticipated CDBG project proposals from non-entitlement localities. The priorities and project list were coordinated with the planning staff of the Cities of Franklin, Poquoson, and Williamsburg and the Counties of Isle of Wight, James City, Southampton, and York.
- The HRPDC, on behalf of the City of Suffolk, Isle of Wight County, and Southampton County and in partnership with Spectrum Southeast, LLC (Charter Communications), submitted a grant application to the VATI through the DHCD to provide universal broadband service in the three localities. The localities and Charter Communications have requested the HRPDC serve as the fiscal agent and administrator of the project. To accomplish this, DHCD requires a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the HRPDC and the City of Suffolk, Isle of Wight County, and Southampton County and a second MOA between the HRPDC and Charter Communications.
- HRPDC staff is requesting authorization to extend the roadway flooding sensor project contract with Xylem and increase the budget by \$95,000. The pilot project has required unanticipated costs for utility pole rental, local permit fees, curb cuts, and labor for permit negotiations. If additional federal funding cannot be obtained, then the HRPDC staff proposes covering the increase in the budget using Coastal Resiliency program funds. Mr. Crum clarified that this request does not include additional local monies for the pilot program.

Motion: Commissioner Neil Morgan Moved to approve the Consent Agenda as presented; seconded by Commissioner John McGlennon. The Motion Carried.

Hampton University Severe Weather Research Center (SWRC)

Mr. Crum introduced Mr. Bill Thomas, Associate Vice President, Hampton University Office of Governmental Relations, and Dr. James Russell, Co-Director of the Hampton University Center for Atmospheric Sciences to brief the Commission on the Hampton University (HU) Severe Weather Research Center (SWRC).

Mr. Thomas began the briefing with background information on the HU SWRC. He stated that Professors James M. Russell, III and M. Patrick McCormick developed the concept of using polar-orbiting and geostationary weather satellite data for real-time prediction of severe convective storms. Additionally, the HU School of Science was chosen to receive a \$1 million grant awarded by the National Science Foundation's HBCU Research Infrastructure

in Science and Engineering (RISE) program. HU will use the grant to construct a supercomputer, which is a cluster of high-powered computers dedicated to numerical modeling and simulation. Mr. Thomas introduced Dr. James Russell, Co-Director of the Hampton University Center for Atmospheric Sciences.

**Commissioner Shannon Glover departed*

Dr. Russell presented an overview of SWRC capabilities and applications. The HU Direct Broadcast System (DBS) was installed in the Harbour Centre building in September 2016, and the DBS antenna system has 360 degrees all-sky tracking. Eleven satellites come over HU daily, and the data is downloaded for use in severe weather prediction. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)'s National Weather Service does routine forecasting while the HU SWRC does state-of-the-art forecasting.

Polar-orbiting satellites provide imagery and atmospheric soundings of temperature and moisture data over the entire Earth. Geostationary satellites are in orbit 22,000 miles above the equator, spin at the same rate as the Earth and constantly focus on the same area. The SWRC forecast capabilities include unprecedented time resolution of 15 minutes and space resolution of one nautical mile by combining polar and geostationary satellite data. The SWRC forecasts use all polar-orbiter satellite sounding data while the NWS uses less than 10%. The HU SWRC provides direct benefits to the Commonwealth, including:

- Higher accuracy predictions at longer warning lead times for forecasts of hurricanes, tornados, and severe storms threatening a region
- State-of-the-art predictions of extreme precipitation leading to localized flooding, hail, and hazardous winds
- Direct liaison capabilities with emergency planning offices to help provide accurate forecast updates and interpret current forecasts

Dr. Russell provided comparisons of the HU SWRC forecast, NOAA/National Centers for Environmental Prediction (NCEP) Rapid Refresh (RAP) forecast, and the actual Rain Gauge/RADAR of six events in 2021 as examples. The comparisons for a severe storm, wind line, flash flood, precipitation flooding, tornados, and high wind events all exhibited significantly improved forecasts using SWRC. During the past weekend on March 12, 2022, there was a strong weather front that caused high winds in Hampton Roads. The NOAA wind forecast was 16.5 meters per second, and the SWRC wind forecast was 25.5 meters per second with a much higher spatial resolution. The observed wind was 26.7 meters per second.

The total SWRC three-year budget request to the state was \$3.19 million. Financial support for the SWRC is essential because the NASA and NOAA federal funding, which supported the initial development of SWRC capabilities, has virtually expired and funding is needed to implement and maintain a fully operational system with continuous reliability. Dr. Russell explained that it will take many years for NOAA to implement SWRC research and

development techniques into their operational system; whereas, with funding, HU can currently provide and maintain these advanced capabilities within a regional operational system, greatly benefitting the Commonwealth. The government and commercial programs that will benefit from this regional NWP capability are as follows:

- Hazardous weather warnings issued can protect the life and property of state and local city and county residents
- Commercial and general aviation airport operations
- Department of Defense (DOD) operations and the protection of aircraft and ship resources from hazardous weather such as hurricanes and tornados
- Dominion Energy Coastal Virginia Offshore Wind energy project

Chair McClellan thanked Mr. Thomas and Dr. Russell for their presentation.

Commissioner McKinley Price expressed his interest in the Commission supporting the institution's mission.

Chair McClellan shared her excitement about the opportunity to do something of this magnitude for the safety of the residents and the benefit of the industry, military, and federal resources in Hampton Roads.

Mr. Geduldig-Yatrofsky asked how this valuable information with lifesaving potential could be disseminated to the populace of Hampton Roads.

Mr. Thomas responded that while HU is focused on providing this education to students, it could do a better job with communications, and he thanked the Commission for allowing them to present to a regional audience.

Commissioner Debbie Ritter asked if the HU SWRC is a subscription service and how local governments or businesses can access the service.

Dr. Russell responded that it is not a subscription service. The SWRC is requesting state funding to continue its work and research. If asked, the SWRC will provide its data to the various Hampton Roads localities and throughout the Commonwealth, but more service will require more funds.

Commissioner Ritter asked if putting the local Emergency Management departments in touch with the SWRC was the best way to proceed.

Mr. Thomas responded that the first step was to get organized and involved.

Commissioner Ritter asked for clarification on how to get involved.

Dr. Russell referenced providing tailored information available to the localities electronically via a website.

Mr. Thomas asked Mr. Crum to help disseminate information to the localities.

Commissioner Mary Bunting thanked Mr. Thomas for crediting the City of Hampton for bringing this information to the forefront. Many times localities have assets and opportunities available that may not be recognized regionally. She highlighted that the Commission is an excellent forum to share, understand, and promote all of Hampton Roads' assets to better compete economically. She added that HU is looking for financial support to continue to sustain its mission. She suggested that the CAOs discuss this information with their local Emergency Management departments and then provide a recommendation on how to collectively support and utilize this resource.

Mr. Thomas thanked Ms. Bunting for her comments and said HU would prepare a number and work with Mr. Crum to circulate it to the CAOs. He added that the best way to help was to promote the importance of the HU SWRC to the Governor and local legislators.

Commissioner Courtney Doyle asked if any of the SWRC's state budget request was in the current proposed budget.

Mr. Thomas responded that none of the request was included in the proposed budget.

Mr. Crum thanked Mr. Thomas and Dr. Russell for sharing this information with the Commission. He suggested that he disseminate the link Dr. Russell referenced to the Commission members and local Emergency Management departments to increase awareness. He also commented that SWRC support may be a good priority to add to the 2023 Regional Legislative Agenda.

Mr. Thomas concluded his remarks by describing a recent survey that ranked HU third out of ten when comparing the median earnings of alumni from Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs).

2022 Hampton Roads Economic Update

Chair McClellan introduced Mr. Greg C. Grootendorst, HRPDC Chief Economist, to present the 2022 Hampton Roads Economic Update.

Mr. Grootendorst began his presentation by providing a review of national and regional economic trends. Mr. Grootendorst showed a comparison of Actual Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to Potential GDP from 2007 to 2021 with Actual GDP improving since the pandemic-related recession. National civilian employment, on the other hand, remains 1.4% below the pre-pandemic high. At the national level, there are currently 2.1 million fewer civilian jobs than two years ago.

Indexed employment numbers indicate a different recession recovery experience for Hampton Roads compared to the Commonwealth and the United States of America (USA). Following the Great Recession, an outflow of federal dollars from the region contributed to a slower recovery. Hampton Roads lost a significant number of military personnel and reductions in defense contracting. Once again, Hampton Roads is recovering from the pandemic-related recession slower than the state and nation.

Civilian employment in Hampton Roads is down 3.9% from the pre-pandemic high compared to a decrease of 2.5% in the Commonwealth and a 2.2% decline for the nation. Hampton Roads civilian employment is down 1.1% from employment levels prior to the Great Recession. Mr. Grootendorst presented Hampton Roads' current industry employment numbers compared to December 2019 and 2020. The healthcare industry continues to struggle. The Leisure & Hospitality industry employment numbers are still not back to where they were in 2019 but have experienced a significant increase in the last year. The Construction industry employment is struggling due to a lack of workforce. The Education Services industry employment numbers are up from two years ago and continue to increase.

The current unemployment rate of 3.8% is down from 5.6% in 2020. However, unemployment rates are indicative of the labor force, which is comprised of the unemployed plus the employed. In two years, the labor force in the USA decreased by 1.4%, the Commonwealth decreased by 4.4%, and Hampton Roads decreased by 5.1%. The number of unemployed people is up in the nation, state, and region. In two years, the number of unemployed people in the USA increased by 8.1%, the Commonwealth increased by 24.1%, and Hampton Roads increased by 22.8%. The Hampton Roads labor force is down by 44,000 people and is not rebounding. The depleted workforce is resulting in significant wage growth toward the bottom of the pay grade. However, wages toward the middle of the pay grade are not changing at the same rate, which is causing wage compression. In some cases, new employees are making more than the people training them. This compression will produce upward pressure on the average wages of the region. The wage growth toward the bottom of the pay scale is positive, but as labor force issues continue, increased wages will push inflation causing an overall rise in the cost of goods resulting from the rise in wages.

Defense spending, the Port of Virginia (POV), and tourism are large components of the region's economy. Military employment has not seen significant increases, but the congressional budget office expects continued increases in defense contracts in the near term. In the long term, the high amount of federal expenditures cannot continue without recourse. Defense spending, a large part of the federal budget, will inevitably experience cuts. From 2016 to 2019, the POV spent roughly \$800 million on infrastructure upgrades, with the completion of the Norfolk International Terminal (NIT) and the Virginia International Gateway (VIG) in 2020. Of the top 50 metro areas, Hampton Roads tourism fared as one of the best in terms of the decline in hotel revenue through the pandemic. Changes in tourism expenditures are inconsistent across the region, but overall tourism

expenditures are up. The Leisure & Hospitality industry employment numbers are increasing but are still not back to where they were pre-pandemic.

In the Hampton Roads housing market, the average number of days on the market has decreased significantly and median sales prices have increased significantly. In some instances, house prices are up 20% to 25% over the past year. The Federal Reserve began raising rates to address inflation, and mortgage rates climbed past 4% for the first time since May 2019. The 30-year fixed-rate mortgage averaged 4.16% in the week of March 17. The effect of rate increases can easily add up to thousands of dollars in added interest charges annually on an average mortgage, so the rising rates are expected to cool the hot housing market.

In 2004, Hampton Roads' annualized growth rate in retail sales was approximately 3.3%. Adjusted for inflation, the annualized growth rate is only 1.1%. In the last two years, the rate of retail sales has increased significantly in Hampton Roads and Virginia. One reason is *South Dakota v. Wayfair*, a 2018 U.S. Supreme Court decision that expanded states' abilities to collect sales taxes from e-commerce and other remote transactions. Another reason is the pandemic as the market was flooded with cash and purchases shifted from services to goods.

**Commissioner Mary Bunting departed*

Most recently, the USA, Commonwealth, and Hampton Roads are experiencing inflationary effects. Inflation and core inflation have increased substantially. Inflation reached its highest rate since 1982. In the last year, prices of used cars and trucks are up over 40%, gasoline is up over 30%, and energy, car and truck rental, and transportation are all up over 20%. Smartphones, cosmetics, video discs, and software are some of the few things where prices are decreasing. Average fuel prices have increased drastically. On March 11, 2022, average prices for a gallon of gas reached their highest amount in Hampton Roads; although on an inflation-adjusted basis, gas prices have been higher in the past.

Mr. Grootendorst presented an overview of the number of COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations, and deaths in Hampton Roads. Health Departments are attributing the recent increase in cases to the BA.2 Omicron subvariant; however, fewer people are getting tested, so the number of hospitalizations may be more indicative of the threat of COVID going forward. He encouraged the Commission members to visit the HRPDC's Hampton Roads COVID-19 Data and Dashboard for additional information.

Mr. Grootendorst continued his presentation with the forecast for the year ahead. Nationally, the growth rate is expected to increase to 3.6%, the Consumer Price Index is forecasted to increase to 6%, and for the first time in a long time, short-term and long-term interest rates are expected to increase to 0.8% and 2.2% respectively. Regionally, the growth rate is expected to increase at a lower rate of 2.3%, civilian employment numbers will continue to struggle to rebound with a forecasted 1.9% increase, the unemployment

rate is expected to decrease slightly, and the forecasted 6.1% gain in retail sales is mostly inflationary.

Mr. Grootendorst concluded his presentation with an overview of ongoing regional initiatives that can positively impact the long-term local economy including the \$5 billion in transportation infrastructure projects, interconnected regional fiber network, economic development site readiness, implementation of a restructured model for economic development through the Hampton Roads Alliance, the EVRIFA revenue-sharing model, offshore wind development, a focused effort of regional supply chain opportunities, and a regional approach to workforce development.

**Commissioner Neil Morgan departed*

Commissioner Randy Wheeler commented that City and County Managers when preparing budgets have to take all of the items mentioned into account, and particularly in Poquoson, the average fuel prices, inflation issues, and the prospect of planning for a double-dip recession. He said that some localities have announced proposing some of the largest pay increases ever, but despite that, most localities will most likely not be able to keep pace with inflation. Commissioner Wheeler asked Mr. Grootendorst if he expected inflation to continue to rise.

Mr. Grootendorst answered that Blue Chip Economic Indicators, a survey of economists, is forecasting that inflation will taper through the rest of the year. The recent 7.9% rate is expected to decrease to 6% in 2022 and to between 3.4% and 3.8% in 2023, which is still high. Mr. Grootendorst added the caveat that there are still a lot of unknowns that could change that significantly.

Regional Broadband Update

Due to time constraints, Chair McClellan provided a brief update on regional broadband efforts. She reported that the Southside Network Authority signed the construction contract, and construction was expected to begin in April and last approximately 18 months.

Mr. Crum added that an additional \$35 million project would occur in the City of Suffolk, Isle of Wight County, and Southampton County to provide last-mile service. Mr. Crum also acknowledged the City of Chesapeake's *Chesapeake Connects* broadband initiative.

Three-Month Tentative Schedule

Chair McClellan noted that no Commission meeting was scheduled in April and the next meeting was scheduled for May 19, 2022.

Advisory Committee Minutes

Chair McClellan stated that the HRPDC Advisory Committee meeting minutes approved since the last Commission meeting were provided for information purposes.

Technical Committee Meeting Summaries

Chair McClellan indicated that the summaries of HRPDC Technical Committee meetings held since the last Commission meeting were included in the agenda for information purposes.

For Your Information

Chair McClellan referenced the correspondence of interest included for Commission member information, which included the following:

- Letter from York County announcing the reappointment of Supervisor Sheila Noll as a member of the Hampton Roads Planning District Commission
- Letter from Surry County announcing the reappointment of Supervisor Robert L. Elliott, Jr. as a member of the Hampton Roads Planning District Commission
- AskHRgreen Awards \$10,000 to Region's Star Environmental Educators

Old/New Business

Commissioner Tuck asked if other localities were also experiencing an increase in vehicle noise caused by loud mufflers.

Adjournment

With no further business to come before the Commission, the meeting adjourned at 2:03 p.m.

☐ Chair

Robert A. Crum, Jr.
Executive Director/ Secretary